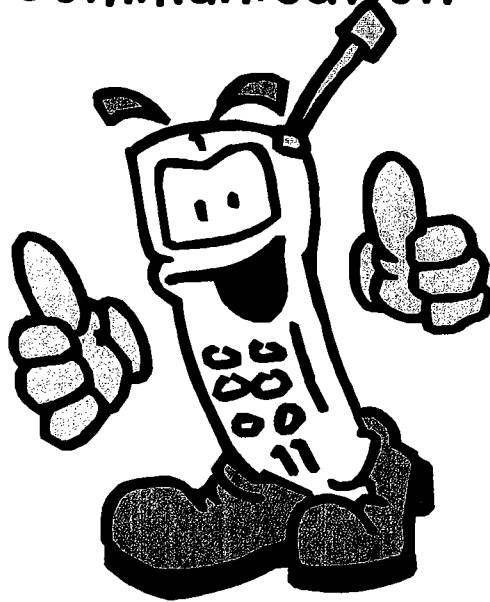


Chapter 5

Communication



Ideas For The Entire Family

Learn how to be tactfully honest
without being brutally frank.

Speaking is only a part of communicating.

Listening is even a greater part of developing
and maintaining communication.

If you want to know what is going on with another person,
listen to what is being said.

Communication is the fine art of balancing speaking and
listening to one another.

Keeping In Touch...Communication Ideas

Communication is very important, especially in a marriage. However, when you are separated for so long, and by so many miles, communication with any loved one back home becomes a vital necessity. Now is the time to open the communication lines with loved ones. Honestly discuss your feelings about deployment. What are your fears and expectations? Have you both considered and discussed what kinds of changes can be expected by the time deployment is over? The spouse at home will be more independent than either can imagine. Your financial situation will change during deployment. By the time the service member returns, goals may have changed. Open communication while apart will help everyone adjust to these changes.

Letters and E-mail are your lifelines to "sanity" (wait until you haven't received one in a week and see if you don't think so). It only takes a little bit of your time to sit down and write. This applies to both military and family members. If you are able to use e-mail, be sure to send letters to the soldiers as well. The highlight of a soldier's day is receiving mail, even junk mail. Try to be optimistic when writing. You may be angry or stressed out since their departure, so wait before you send it and re-read it.

When Writing The Military Member:

Depending on where your soldier is stationed, mail may be irregular at best. Letters and packages seldom arrive 2 days in a row. Sometimes it will all arrive at one time. As much as 2 to 3 weeks can pass from the time it is mailed and received. E-mail servers do crash and can be out of service for several days, or even a week.

The "too perfect letter" where everything is great and the kids are angels is either unbelievable, or may cause more worry. They may feel you don't need them around anymore (this is one of the worst, and most common fears the member will have while deployed). The letter that includes every little irritation, is full of complaints about how he or she must come home to fix something or discipline a child, causes nightmares for a service member.

So What Do You Do? Begin open communication before the spouse leaves. First, recognize that life's problems will continue regardless of a deployment, so anticipate potential problems and visualize your plans of action. Know how and who to call for repairs and emergencies (fill out the check lists in this Guide). Get involved in a support network (friends, neighbors, people in the same situation as you, if possible).

If something breaks and it can wait a couple of weeks, or your child does something you're not sure how to handle, you can ask your spouse's opinion in a

letter. Your spouse may be able to give you ideas or help save you money, which will help add to your skills and confidence. If something needs immediate attention, deal with it the best you can and use your support network. If you have a bad day, you can explain that in a letter, but try to be optimistic for tomorrow.

A Letter Writer's Guide

HERE ARE SOME IDEAS TO HELP ENHANCE YOUR LONG DISTANCE COMMUNICATION. Make a copy of this page for both spouses to have during separation.

- Answer all questions. Write with your spouse's letter and picture in front of you as though talking directly to them.
- Ask advice when needed.
- Explain problems clearly. If vague and unresolved, your spouse will worry.
- Express appreciation for letters, tapes, etc., mentioning one or two points of special interest.
- Tell of daily activities in an amusing and interesting way.
- Remember the importance of the amount and frequency of expressions of affection.
- Share your feelings as openly and freely as you can without indulging in self-pity. Let your spouse know you would like to share their feelings.
- Above all, express yourself clearly and unequivocally so he/she will not have to say, "I wonder what was meant by that!" Neither husband nor wife should try to interpret what the other says, read between the lines, or dissect the meanings. If you do not understand, ask questions - otherwise take things at "face value."
- If you have children, have them enclose notes, if they can write, and drawings. Send photos of home, the Christmas tree, home activities, etc. Military members should write separate letters to the children rather than a joint letter.

- Give news of the neighborhood, friends, and relatives.
- Write often. If that is hard, supplement with cards.

Write your letters the same way you'd want them to write to you. You want to know what goes on around

them, good and bad. You want to know about their friends and how they spend their leisure time. You want to know they still love and need you. They want to hear those things from you, also.

Morale Calls and More

HAVEN'T HEARD FROM YOUR SPOUSE? If you have not heard from your spouse, you may feel hurt, angry, frustrated, or disappointed. It is natural to want to vent those feelings. An excellent way is to go ahead and write that letter, the one that would have their ears burning for a week. Do not mail it for at least 3 days. Keep it in a prominent place where you will see it daily. Think about what you have written. How would you like to receive that letter? Have you written as often as they have? What would you do if you received 5 letters from them the day after you mail it? Will your letter really do any good or just make your spouse angry and cease all communications? After 3 days re-read what you have written. Do you still feel the same way? There are times in every deployment when the pressure and disappointments may build to a point when both spouses may need to express feelings or explode. This is normal and can be managed if channeled properly.

So What Do You Do? What kind of situation or responsibility is your spouse handling right now? Do they have little or no extra time for more than a meal on the run and a quick nap? For the military member who is deployed, the usual workday is 12 hours or more, 7 days a week, and the spouse at home now has twice the responsibilities.

Start A Journal. When you wrote that note, you made a journal entry. Journals are a super way to express your self and release those cooped up emotions. It's like a diary. You can make entries daily, weekly, or however you choose. You'll probably find changes over time in your perspective. Focus on your feelings when writing in your journal, in the roller-coaster of emotions, and in your own personal growth.

Morale Calls

One way to keep in touch with each other is through a program that the Air Force has called the Hearts Apart Morale Calling Program. Air Force base operators will permit you to call your deployed spouse once a week. And you get to place the call from home! The call is free of charge, unless you live far enough away from a base that it would be a long distance call to the base operator. The call from your home to the base carries a toll. In that case, you pay only the cost of the call to and from the base. You're allowed one call per week, lasting up to 17 minutes. The operator may cut-in at about 15 minutes to give you and your spouse a two-minute warning. That way you don't get cut off without the chance to say your good-byes.

To take advantage of this program you must register through the Family Support Center of the Air Force base closest to your home. You can locate this base by going to www.afcrossroads.com. Take a copy of your spouse's orders and speak to the Family Support

Director. You need to know the "DSN" (Defense Switching Network) number for your spouse's unit in order to place these calls.

When you place your call you will first call the base operator. The Air Force Family Support Center can provide that number. Tell the operator you're placing a Morale Call, who you are, who you're calling, and the DSN number. They'll ask questions so they can log the call.

A Warning: When using military lines you may get cut off without warning for a military priority call. If that happens and you've spoken for less than three minutes, you can retry your Morale Call. You get one call per week; the week is considered Sunday through Saturday. If an emergency arises and you've already used your weekly Morale Call, contact your unit POC.

Calls Within the US

Frequent calls to your soldier can put a strain on your budget. Shop around for a less expensive calling plan such as one of the 10-10-XXX services. Another way to save is to purchase low cost per minute phone cards. You may want to determine how much you can afford to spend each month on phone calls and purchase a card for that amount.

Overseas Calls

Nothing can substitute for the sound of a loved one's voice, which is why overseas calls are so popular. The cost, however, may be exorbitant! Agree before the deployment starts how many times, and when calls can be made. Then budget the money to cover it. Have a prepared list of what you want to talk about. Be ready for the unexpected, such as tears and expressions of loneliness.

Many long distance providers offer special international calling packages with lower rates for international calls. However, be aware that your long distance rates for calling within the U.S. will probably increase. If you have two phone lines, use one for U.S. long-distance rates and the other for

international rates. Using a telephone company calling card (MCI, AT&T, Sprint) may be the most expensive way to call home.

E-Mail, Emergency Messages, and the Media

E-Mail

Most soldiers will have e-mail access. E-mail is the least expensive way to communicate, and offers almost instant contact. The wide availability of e-mail during deployments has reduced the rumor mill and eases the separation. Many families who do not have e-mail at home decide to purchase a computer just before a deployment. Learning to use a computer and an e-mail program can be stressful. You may want to consider this aspect before faced with deployment and the stresses it brings. What you will need to use e-mail from your home:

- A computer or WebTV.
- An e-mail service provider such as America Online, CompuServe, etc. There may be a monthly fee.
- USAA EarthLink/Sprint, 1-800-896-3419, offers a discount to USAA members for e-mail and Internet access, and has excellent technical support.
- Juno is a free e-mail service offered through Blockbuster video (1-800-398-JUNO). This service can utilize an 800 number for access if there is no local access number. It is solely an e-mail service and does not offer Internet access.

Emergency Messages

Sometimes you need a speedier method of contacting the service member, because of a serious illness or injury, a death in the family, a birth, routine and/or unexpected hospitalization, birthdays, anniversaries, and other special occasions. Depending on the severity of the situation there are two ways of sending a message. **First, contact your Unit Point of Contact for advice.** Once you have sent an emergency message, follow up with a written letter, giving all the details.

American Red Cross. They require verified information to send a message. Greetings may not be sent, only emergency information. The Red Cross does not grant emergency leave. If a situation does not occur in the local area, you will save some time by contacting the Red Cross Chapter nearest the situation. In almost all cases, the Red Cross notification is necessary for emergency leave to be granted by the military member's Commander. **THERE IS NO CHARGE FOR RED CROSS MESSAGES.** Before you call have the following information on hand:

- Soldier's full name and SSN
- Nature of the emergency
- Soldier's military unit

Get the name of the Red Cross caseworker with whom you spoke.

Western Union Messages. Messages can be sent through the Western Union System. Many people will see your message before the message is received. Do not say anything that might embarrass you or your spouse. It's recommended to not send bad news, which will cause pain and/or distress. These messages should go through the Red Cross. It won't cost anything, and the message will be given to the Commander or Chaplain who can give it to the soldier with the appropriate level of concern and comfort.

When The Media Calls... Tips on Surviving News Media Inquiries

The families of deployed service members may be approached by local and national news media for interviews. Here are some tips about coping:

- Know your rights. It's your choice whether or not to speak to reporters. If you do choose to speak, remember it is your right to stop any time.
- Know the role and purpose of the American press. They are doing a job vital to democracy. Understand that it is NOT harassment when they call you at home or stop you at the supermarket asking for an interview. Only when they persist after having been told "No" does it become harassment.
- Know with whom you are talking. Before answering questions, write down the reporter's name, telephone number and the name of his or her news organization. Do this even if you're going to decline to comment; it'll discourage him from persisting after you say no.

- Know who will hear you. Even family members might have information useful to opposing forces. Thanks to technology, the enemy can have access to what you say the moment you say it. On the other hand, when you are enthusiastic about your spouse's mission, your response can build morale.
- Know your limits. It is best not to talk about anything of which you do not have first-hand knowledge. There is nothing wrong with saying "I don't know" in response to questions to which you have no answer. Don't speculate.
- Finally, if your spouse calls home with information about his unit's return home, with news about casualties, or about how the mission is going, remember to take what is said with a grain of salt and keep it to yourself. Combat spawns rumors, and some of what he tells you could be sensitive, wrong, or subject to change.



Useful Websites

88th Regional Support Command Web Site:

<http://www.usarc.army.mil/88thrc/>

American Legion Support Network:

<http://www.legion.org>

American Red Cross:

<http://redcross.org>

Army Family Liaison Home Page:

<http://www.hqda.army.mil/acsim/family/family.htm>

Army Family Team Building:

<http://www.aftb.org>

Army Knowledge On-Line (AKO):

<http://www.us.army.mil>

Army National Guard (ARNG):

<http://www.ngb.dtic.mil>

Army Reserve:

<http://www.army.mil/usar>

Army Reserve Benefits:

<http://www.goarmyreserve.com/benefits.htm>

Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) :

<http://www.asafm.army.mil/DFAS>

Department of Defense (DOD):

<http://www.defenselink.mil>

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA):

<http://www.va.gov>

Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve:

<http://esgr.org>

ID Cards/DEERS/RAPIDS:

<http://dmdc.osd.mil/rsi>

Internal Revenue Service (IRS)

<http://www.irs.ustreas.gov>

Lifelines: <http://www.lifelines.com>

Military Assistance Program"MAPsite":

<http://dticaw.dtic.mil/mapsite>

Military periodicals:

<http://www.dtic.mil/search97doc/aulimp/>

Reserve Affairs (Office of Assistant Secretary of

Defense): <http://www.defenselink.mil/ra/>

Standard Forms (SFA's):

<http://web1.whs.osd.mil/icdhome/sfeforms.htm>

TAPS (Tragedy Assistance Programs for Survivors,

Inc.): <http://www.taps.org>

TRICARE: <http://www.tricare.osd.mil>

United Concordia: <http://www.ucci.com>

U.S. Army Community and Family Support Center

Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR):

<http://www.armymwr.com/>

U.S. Army Reserve Command:

<http://www.usarc.army.mil>

U.S. Army Reserve Family Program:

<http://www.army.mil/usar/>

U.S. Postal Service: <http://www.usps.gov>

Veterans Employment & Training Service:

<http://www.dol.gov/dol/vets>

Overseas Travel

Passports: Passports are required for overseas travel. A regular passport is issued for unofficial travel. All required fees, including cost of photographs must be provided at your own expense. Applications for new or renewal of expiring passports are at the United States Post Office. You must be a U. S. citizen to apply. You will need the following items:

- Application fee is \$60 for an adult and \$40 under the age of 18 years.
- Certified copy of your birth certificate for new passports.
- Proof of identification, such a military ID or driver's license.
- Passport pictures of yourself.
- Current immunization record.

Visas: A visa is permission granted by the government of a country for an alien to enter that country and remain for a specified period of time. A visa is usually in the form of an imprinted stamp affixed to one of the pages in passport books. Visas may be required for each country you plan to visit. Apply for visas through your travel agent or at the various consulates well in advance of your departure date.

Miscellaneous: Be sure to purchase traveler's checks and exchange small amounts of U.S. currency into foreign currency before you leave. It may be possible

to get reduced fares on airline tickets for traveling overseas as a military spouse.

Air Mobility Command (AMC)

The Air Mobility Command (AMC) is a cost effective and convenient way to travel for military personnel. AMC contracts charters with commercial carriers. Charter seats that are not filled by official fliers are assigned on a space-available basis, free of charge. Travelers include active and reserve component members on leave, retirees and academy cadets. Flights currently depart from Seattle-Tacoma International, Los Angeles International, Baltimore-Washington International, Atlanta Hartsfield International and Charleston S.C. International. Visit the Air Mobility Command Web site at <http://public.scott.af.mil/hqamc/> for full details on space-available flight rules and procedures, flight schedules, operations, addresses and phone numbers, sign-ups and more.

Care Packages

A "care package" is exactly what it sounds like - a little bit of home that says, "I love you." With a little planning, they can be a great link over the distances. They are also morale builders during deployment. Be careful of what you send - the one rare commodity is privacy. What you send will probably be seen by a number of other people.

Packages going overseas are subject to customs inspection and may be opened by the host country inspectors. Do not expect any "love talk" on any recorded messages they may send home - your spouse may be embarrassed for anyone else to hear what they most want to say.

Mailing Tips

You may want to give this information to your friends and relatives before they send care packages:

- **UPS WILL NOT ACCEPT PACKAGES ADDRESSED TO APOs AND FPOs.**
- Packages can't weigh more than 70 pounds, and must not exceed 108 inches in width or length.
- Do not use wrapping paper and/or string, as it will foul up the postal machines. The post office recommends you use reinforced nylon strapping tape.
- The deployed member will not have to pay custom tariffs on packages mailed to APOs or FPOs.
- If cookies are not packed tightly in their container and well cushioned, you might get a letter about the lovely crumbs you sent. (No real tragedy - after two weeks or more of field rations, they will eat the cardboard box if they think it is homemade).
- Put an extra address card **INSIDE** before sealing the package. If the box should be damaged, and neither address on the outside can be read, it will be opened by the post office. If they cannot find an address, the whole package goes to the dead-letter bin.
- Do not send anything that is highly perishable: There is no refrigeration available.
- If you send a package for a special occasion, mail it so it has plenty of time to arrive. Better a little early than to let them think you have forgotten them.
- Add paper, pens, pencils, stamps, and addressed envelopes and post cards.
- Do not send aerosols (shaving cream, deodorants, etc.) or liquids in glass containers.
- If the member gets promoted, send congratulations.
- Mark packages with recordings or videos "MAGNETIC RECORDED TAPES INSIDE, DO NOT X-RAY."
- Send them storybooks and blank cassette tapes, and ask them to record stories and send them back, so even while they are gone, they can still "read" to the children.
- Wrap each item (even candy) individually as if it were a very expensive gift...let there be a little Christmas in every package you send.

- Include some photographs, not only of the children, but of yourself as well, and any outings you may have taken.
- Record dinner one evening, complete with fussing and bickering (better to keep it a secret if you want it to be spontaneous) so your spouse can feel like they are there with you. Don't be surprised if your spouse doesn't listen to the tape. For some spouses it hurts too much to hear the voices of the family members they miss. In this case, don't expect a response. For others it may be a breath of fresh air to hear the voices of their loved ones.

Care Package Ideas

Make it fun & creative!

Obvious

| | |
|--------------------------------|---------------|
| Cookies/Brownies/Fudge | Magazines |
| Newspaper Clippings | Cartoon Books |
| "I Love You" cards | Joke Books |
| Razor Blades/Disposable Razors | Pictures |
| Self-addressed Envelopes | Puzzle Books |

Not So Obvious

| | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------|
| VCR Home Movies | Popcorn Balls |
| Nuts | Tylenol or Aspirin |
| Kiddy Art | School work |
| International Coffee | Box Munchies |
| Trail Mix | Snack Sausages |
| Health Food Snacks | Deodorant |
| Stamps | Final Report Cards |
| Shoe insole cushions | Candy Bars |
| Oreo Cookies | Vienna sausages Specialty teas |
| Hickory Farm gift box | Puzzles |
| Game | Sewing kit supplies |
| Dice | Buttermint candy Shampoo |
| Jerky | |

Maybe You Would Not Think Of...

| | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Subscriptions | Hand-held fan |
| Sewn, knitted, crocheted gifts | |
| Models | Gifts to send to children |
| Clothes/PJ's | Cards to relatives & dates |
| Batteries | Chapstick |
| Church newsletter | Travel alarm |
| Taped TV Shows | Scorebook Tapes Music Tapes |
| Shoeshine kit | Sunscreen |
| | Tupperware (keep goodies fresh) |
| | Holiday decorations |